



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Phone: (651) 602-7900
Fax: (651) 602-7914

Transmitted via Email

December 29, 2004

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 250-5-5

SUBJECT: FNM –TRAVEL – USE OF THE TRAVEL CREDIT CARD

Purpose. To remind all employees of the proper use of the travel charge card in accordance with the terms and conditions of their cardholder agreement.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2005.

Most USDA employees who have a travel charge card use it properly and responsibly. However, incidents of improper use, perhaps due to lack of knowledge, are becoming more frequent. Employees are held accountable for paying the travel charge card in accordance with the terms and conditions of their cardholder agreement. Here is what you need to know about the travel charge card.

USDA Departmental Regulation Number 2300-001, "Government Travel Card Regulation", dated October 20, 2003, sets forth the "**USDA Zero Tolerance Policy**" for any inappropriate charges and delinquencies. The underlying objective of the "**USDA Zero Tolerance Policy**" is to eliminate misuse and abuse in the travel card program so that it does not become necessary to impose disciplinary procedures on any USDA employee. Proper use of the travel card reduces the need to cancel travel charge card privileges, eliminates the administrative burden of taking action against employees, lessens the stress for all involved, and preserves the reputation of USDA and its employees to achieve its mission and goals with integrity. **Zero Tolerance** strictly prohibits the following misuses of the card:

A. Unauthorized charges and charges not associated with official travel.

- (1) Personal and family member use of the card is forbidden.
- (2) USDA restricts most Merchant Category Code (MCC) that offers services and/or products that are not-travel related expenses. Employees are prohibited from use of their travel card to procure the following:
 - (a) Book and magazine subscriptions.
 - (b) Membership fees.
 - (c) Training and conference fees.
 - (d) Higher Education expenses.
 - (e) Theme parks.
 - (f) Management consulting services.
 - (g) Automobile purchases; car repairs, and services.
 - (h) Clothing, lingerie, outerwear, shoes, and furniture.
 - (i) Hair services, cosmetics, tattoos, and massages.
 - (j) Emergency medical services.
 - (k) Office supplies.
 - (l) Computers, televisions, or digital equipment.
 - (m) Any service or product obtained for personal, family, or household purposes.

- (3) USDA prohibits the use of the travel charge card to purchase fuel and procure minor maintenance services on GSA fleet or agency-owned vehicles. Use of the USDA fleet card is the appropriate payment method for purchases incurred while operating government-owned vehicles.
- B. **Charges while not in an official travel status.**
 - (1) Use of the card in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence is forbidden, unless used in connection with official travel.
 - (2) Cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine are also forbidden.
- C. **Shared use of the card with another employee for official travel purposes.**
- D. **Allow account to become delinquent.**
- E. **Failure to use the card while on travel unless exempted.**
- F. **Failure to pay accounts with sufficient funds.**
- G. **Failure to properly use Government voucher reimbursements to repay travel expenses.**
- H. **Excessive cash advances, or cash advances not commensurate with official travel.**
- I. **GSA has exempted the following official travel expenses and/or classes of employees from the mandatory use of the travel card.**
 - (1) Expenses incurred at a vendor that does not accept the Government travel charge card.
 - (2) Laundry/dry cleaning.
 - (3) Parking
 - (4) Local transportation systems.
 - (5) Taxi
 - (6) Tips
 - (7) Meals (when use of the card is impractical, e.g., group meals or when the travel card is not accepted).
 - (8) Phone calls (when a Government calling card is available for use in accordance with Departmental policy).
 - (9) When an employee has an application pending for the travel charge card.
 - (10) When individuals are traveling on invitational travel.
 - (11) New agency employees who must travel before receiving their travel card.
 - (12) Relocation allowances, except for en-route travel and house hunting trips.
- J. **You may use the travel card to obtain cash advances for exempted expenses described in paragraph I. These cash advances are limited to meals and incidental expenses rate (M&IE) for the location of the temporary duty location and other cash expenses identified in paragraph I. For this reason, cash needs should not exceed \$50 per day. In addition, USDA will reimburse travelers for service fees incurred for those ATM advances not exceeding \$50 per day multiplied by the number of calendar days in domestic travel status. Cash obtained from the ATM in amounts greater than required for the travel duration are considered excessive cash advances. A copy of the ATM receipt should be attached to the voucher.**

Questions may be directed to Michele Blesi, A/OPC, at (651) 602-7896 or Mary Jo Polunc, Budget Officer, at (651) 602-7860.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: AE